

*K Bible - Old Testament
Appendix*

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LETTERS

CONCERNING THE
STUDY
OF THE
HEBREW SCRIPTURES.



L O N D O N,

Printed (by *H. Woodfall*) for the AUTHOR:
And sold by *E. WITHERS*, at the *Seven Stars* in
Fleet-Street, facing *Chancery-Lane*. 1755.

(Price One Shilling.)

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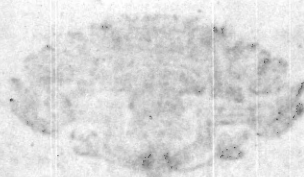
LETTERS

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L O N D O N

Printed by H. W. B. MUSEUM

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TO THE
READER.

THE following letters were written in a private manner, some time since, to a young gentleman of Oxford, who was designed for holy orders, and were never intended for the press; but are now made public by the desire of a person, whose judgment the author has a much better opinion of than his own. The design of them is to inculcate the study of the Hebrew scriptures, and bring, if possible, a neglected language into use; and this is not attempted by anything the author has to produce of his own,

To the Reader.

but by a modest defence and recommendation of Mr. Hutchinson, whom he looks upon as a restorer of true and valuable learning; one who seems to have done as much in behalf of the Hebrew scriptures, as Erasmus, and other learned men did, before him, in favour of the Greek.



LET-



LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

AS I have engaged you to the study of the *Hebrew scriptures*, and you are so far advanced already, as to believe that the *points* are no essential part of the language, nor any ways necessary towards a right explication of it, I now proceed, in compliance with your request, to inform you, by what means you will best acquire that which you so earnestly seek after, the true knowlege and understanding of God's word. In order to which, it will be necessary for me to examine into the received *methods of interpretation*, and see whether they are sufficient for this purpose.

J B

CER.

CERTAIN it is, that the Hebrew is a language, of which there is not one sentence preserved to us, except what is contained in the holy scriptures; and it is also as certain, that it is the record which God has given of himself to all ages; and that he is consequently concerned to preserve it intelligible to us: The question is, by *what means* he has done this?

THE general answer to which has been, that we have the *Greek Septuagint translation*, and *Chaldee Paraphrases* handed down to us for this purpose; the former of which is of more especial note and authority, because it was uncontestably made before the coming of Christ; at a time when the Jews were under no temptation to oppose the genuine sense of the scriptures (as they afterwards were) and when they may well be supposed, to have understood the Hebrew tongue *perfectly*, and to have interpreted it *truly*; a translation which the *apostles* themselves usually quote, and which the *primitive fathers* trusted to for many ages after.

AND

AND moreover the Jews themselves, who must be supposed to be well acquainted with their own scriptures, have since this, taken incredible pains in explaining and interpreting them; and have, given us several *grammars* and *lexicons* to assist and direct us in the understanding the Hebrew language. And although it must be acknowledged, that there is not any original Hebrew extant, except what is contained in the Hebrew scriptures, yet as all the *Oriental languages* have an affinity with each other, they become no small helps to us in discovering the true meaning of many words, and in some measure supply the place of cotemporary writings in the Hebrew tongue; and that taking all these helps together, the *old testament* is made very intelligible to us, and accordingly it has, in all ages of the church, been very well understood and explained.

THIS is what has been generally alleged, in behalf of the received methods of interpretation of the Hebrew scriptures; which are hereby declared to be, by recourse had, either to the *Septuagint translation*,

station, or to the *Rabbinical interpretations*, or to the *Oriental languages* : of each of which in their order, and first of the *Septuagint translation*.

I HAVE already mentioned the *Chaldee paraphrases*, and it is well known there are many other Greek translations of great antiquity, besides that of the *Septuagint*; but as this version is the most ancient, and of the greatest authority, if I can prove that this is not to be depended on in its constructions, I conceive that no other translation or paraphrase can pretend to be so.

WE are told, that the *Septuagint translation* was made at a time, when the Jews were under no temptation to oppose the true genuine sense of scripture, and when they may be well supposed to have understood the Hebrew tongue *perfectly*, and to have interpreted it *truly*.

THOSE who believe the history of *Aristeas*, place the time, in which this translation was made, in the 277th year before Christ; others place it later; but all agree, that

that it was made about this time, during the reign of the *Ptolemys* in *Egypt*, near the middle of the 536 years, which passed between the Jews return from the captivity and the coming of Christ.

SOME years before this, as * *Prideaux* informs us, viz. in the 291st year before Christ, *oral tradition* was first set up by *Antigonus*, successor to *Simon* the just; and in him began the appellation of *Tannaim*, or *Mishnical* doctors. But if the *Septuagint translation* was made after *oral tradition* was set up, what right have we to suppose, that they understood the Hebrew tongue perfectly, or interpreted it truly? This is such an insult upon the authority of the original, as will justify us in suspecting, if not their abilities, at least their integrity; and when we consider farther, that they were at this time tainted with divers superstitious opinions, and divided into sects, how can we say, they were under no temptations to oppose the true genuine sense of the scriptures? The sect that was uppermost was that of the *Pharisees*, and what the *Pharisees* were, Christ him-

* Connect, Vol. II. p. 2.

himself has sufficiently informed us. *They loved the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men Rabbi, Rabbi.* And as these honours were obtained, rather by the outward observance of the law, than by any regard to the *inward and spiritual* meaning of it, they rested wholly on the ritual performance of the ceremonies, and were by this means, when Christ came, so grossly ignorant of their own scriptures, as to expect a temporal Messiah; a notion this so very absurd, as must have been some time in taking root, nay, could never have prevailed, unless those in authority had long taught and countenanced it,

If you think I charge them unjustly, by carrying these neglects too far back, I desire you would read what is said of them by the prophets, before they were carried into captivity, and tell me, whether you can find they were ever after altered for the better. *The Lord hath poured out upon you, says Isaiah xxix. 10, 11, 12. the spirit of deep sleep, and hath closed your eyes; your prophets and your rulers, the seers, hath*
be

be covered; which *St. Paul* alludes to in his time, and says, *According as it is written, God hath given them the spirit of slumber, eyes that they should not see, and ears that they should not hear, unto this day* *. And *Isaiab* vi. 9, 10. which is to the same purpose, is applied to them by all the four Evangelists: so that they were under a judicial blindness, from the time of the captivity to the coming of Christ; and shall we trust to a translation made in this interval, as perfect, and fully expressive of the original? *If the blind lead the blind, shall they not both fall into the ditch?*

BUT not only the time *when* this translation first appeared, but also the uncertainty *by whom* it was made, casts no small blemish upon it. Some think the *Alexandrian* Jews were the authors of it; and if so, they were under a pagan government, and were more corrupted in their services than the Jews at *Jerusalem*; and how do we know, whether this translation was voluntary, or commanded by a heathen prince †?

If

* Rom. xi. 8. † Agreeable to this, we are told by *Drusius*, Obs. sacr. lib. 15. cap. 7. that in *Lev.* xi. 6. and *Deut.* xiv. 7. where the *hars*, אֲרֻבָּה, is reckoned among

If the latter, we cannot expect a very faithful one; if the former, we know not upon what motives, good or bad. But supposing we grant, that the Jews at *Jerusalem* were the authors, they also might have their views, and it is very probable did not mean a strict translation, but such as might best recommend their law and nation to foreigners. But these you will say are only surmises; true, but I shall be in some measure warranted in them, if you will be pleased to observe, that when this translation was publicly received by the Jewish rulers at *Jerusalem*, they fixed a curse upon any one who should attempt to alter it, although they knew it to be the work of fallible men, and such as consequently might be improved for the better; and although they had full power to establish the use of it, without all this intemperate zeal. Now when I see people cursing others without occasion, and against the reason of the thing, I always suspect ambition, or faction, or something worse.

AND among the unclean beasts, that they have avoided translating it by the proper Greek word *Λαγώς*, because it was the name of King *Ptolemy's* Queen.

* “*Dira imprecati sunt in omnes, qui quicquam in eâ melius tentarent,*” says *Walton*. Proleg. 9. sect. 2.

AND it is to be considered farther, that we are not only at a loss for the true authors of the *Septuagint* version, but we do not so much as know, whether this translation was made from the *original Hebrew*, or from the *Chaldee vulgate*, then in use, as * *Philo Judæus*, and some of the *Rabbies* since inform us. And indeed the loose manner of this translation, the disagreement of it with the original, in several places, the many omissions, insertions, transpositions, &c. are enough to shew, that if it was taken from the original, it is a version very imperfect and corrupt. In the law indeed, and what are called the historical books, it is for the most part tolerable, but in the prophetic, let, those that cry it up defend it if they can; for there is scarce a chapter but will convince them, that this could never be an exact translation from the original Hebrew. To what purpose then is it cried up as perfect and authentic, so clear and satisfactory, as even to render the study of the Hebrew almost needless; why are the labours of these men extolled to such an

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* See *Voisin's* Preface to *Pugio Fidei*. 114.

unreasonable height, as to make it presumption in any who pretends to improve upon them? The translators of our English bible were certainly of another opinion, for they take upon them to deviate from the Septuagint, whenever they think it not expressive of the original; and by so doing, give the authority to the Hebrew, where it is due, and where only indeed it can be placed.

BUT we will now suppose the Septuagint translation to be a most excellent one in its kind, far beyond every thing that has been exhibited since; and yet even in this case it is to be considered, that a * translation cannot convey the full meaning of any language, much less that of the Hebrew, which is in its own nature more untranslatable than any other tongue; and that if this was God's method of preserving his word intelligible to us, we should surely have had more translations than one, and those in many different tongues, and of ancients date: one translation, though ever so good, is not sufficient to preserve

* “ Nullus unquam sententiam alicujus intellexerit,
“ ignarus sermonis quo sententiam ille suam explicuit.”
Erasm. Adag.

a dead language, because in this case, it supercedes the original. It may be said indeed, there is the *Chaldee paraphrase*; but this (if all that the Jews say of it be true) is not of equal authority with the *Septuagint*, and therefore cannot controul that which is superior to it. How then, you will say, is God's word preserved intelligible to us? If the *Septuagint* does not do it, what is there better, that we have to depend upon? I answer, the *Hebrew original*; which, when duly examined, will be found to have a native lustre of its own, far surpassing that of the *Septuagint*, which may indeed serve to discover, but never can express its beauties. I have as great a value for the *Septuagint* as any other person, and am ready to allow that the Hebrew is preserved intelligible by it; but then it must be remembered, that this is not owing to any excellency of its own, but to the peculiar structure of the Hebrew language, which, being built upon roots, is explicative of itself, and wants only a translation, to lead us, by the several usages of a word in different places, to the original idea of every root; which the *Septuagint*, though a very de-

fective translation, may yet be *sufficient* for.

Now if this is really the case, and God intended by this translation, not so much to spare our pains, as to excite our industry, what shall we say of those, who make this very translation an excuse for their neglect of the Hebrew original, in that they say the *Septuagint* is sufficient without it to teach us all *material* truths? If they would take the pains to compare them together, I am confident, they would find themselves mistaken; and till they do so, they certainly take a matter upon trust, into which, of all others, they are most concerned to enquire.

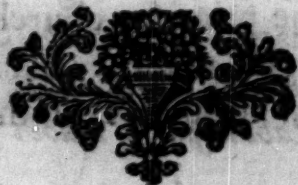
GREAT stress has been laid upon the *Apostles* making use of this version, and quoting from it; as also the great reverence paid to it by the *primitive church*. Had the *Apostles* never deviated from the *Septuagint*, it might indeed have been a presumptive argument of its authority; but as they frequently do so, their conduct is so far from being an argument in its favour, that it tends greatly to its discredit;
for

for as the apostles wrote in Greek, and this version was then in use, it may be presumed, they would chuse to quote from it, if they could, not only in regard to the *Greek Gentiles*, but because it was avoiding disputes, and stopping the mouths of the *Jews*, who might have disallowed of any other translation, but could not reject their own. When therefore we find them so † often receding from it, it was not without necessity, in that the translation was not sufficiently expressive of the original. Some authority was due to it, it is plain, else it had not been quoted at all; and if an adequate translation is impossible, why not *this* as well as *another*? For if this silenced the *Jews*, and answered the main end at the same time, it was preferable to any other, and was accordingly made use of by the Apostles.

As to the primitive church, it must be acknowledged, that they did not attend to the Hebrew scriptures so much as they ought

† Bishop *Wetenhall*, in his book entitled, *Scripture authentic and faith certain*, has collected 40 texts in the *New Testament* quoted from the *Old*, 22 of which are according to the *Hebrew*, and different from the *Septuagint*; which one circumstance is enough to destroy the pretended authority of this version.

ought to have done, but contented themselves with a translation of great authority, as they thought, in their own tongue; which though an inexcusable neglect, yet it may be urged in their behalf, that as the light of the gospel shone so bright in their days, and their convictions were strong, they had not so great an occasion for the evidence arising from the knowledge of the *Hebrew scriptures*, as we have now: and what if God thought proper to reserve this his inestimable treasure, for the instruction of these *latter days*, when *human reason* usurps the authority due only to *scripture*, and every little weak argument stalks about, as if it had the force of evidence?



LET.



LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,



HAVING in my last letter shewn what little dependance is to be had on the *translations*, without consulting the *Hebrew original*, I now proceed to inform you, what is to be expected from the *Jewish Rabbies*; under which title I include all such Jews, who have given us any explication of the Hebrew scriptures*, since the time of our Saviour.

THE first of these Rabbies, who undertook to give us any insight into the Hebrew language, was *Rabbi Saadiah*, who flourished Anno Dom. 927; after whom followed *Rabbi Juda*, *Rabbi Jona*, *David Kimchi*,

* The greatest part of the *Chaldee Paraphrase*, indeed all, except the Pentateuch, is said to be written since our Saviour's time; but the Rabbies I speak of are of a much later date.

Kimchi, Aben Ezra, &c * ; who all complain of the general decay of the knowledge of the Hebrew tongue, and seem apprehensive of an universal ignorance of it ensuing, if not prevented by their labours; which I the rather mention, because it has been supposed, that the Jews were always accustomed to the constant usage of the Hebrew tongue, and well acquainted with their own scriptures; and in consequence of this, have been said to be more skilful than others in their interpretations; whereas it was, by their own confession, as much a dead language to them, as it is now to us, nor can they boast of any superior advantages.

BUT whatever their skill was, and whatever service may have accrued to us from their great industry and pains, this is certain, that they were *enemies* to the *Christian faith*, and as such, are not to be relied upon. No man will suffer writings, of any concern to him, to be interpreted by his declared enemies. But it may be urged, that although they were ene-

* See *Hottinger's Smegma Orientale*, Cap. 3.
P. 33.

enemies, they might not undertake this work with any ill design. To which I answer, were they ever so fair and candid, they could never instruct us in the true genuine sense of the scriptures, because they did not know it themselves; if *Christ* is the *end* of the *law*, and they deny *him*, they can never be received as *interpreters* of the *law*.

BUT as they never attempted any explication of the Hebrew tongue, till long after the publication of their * *Mishnah* and both the *Talmuds*, we are no longer at a

* The *Mishnah*, is a collection of all the ancient traditions of the Jews, to the time of *Rabbi Juda Hak-Eddosh*, the compiler of it; who flourished about the middle of the second century, in the reign of the emperor *Antoninus Pius*. This book is the text, and the *Talmud* is a comment on it. The *Jerusalem Talmud* was compiled by the Jews who dwelt in *Judæa*, about 300 years after Christ; and the *Babylonish Talmud*, by those who dwelt in *Mesopotamia*, about 500 years after Christ, according to the account which the Jewish writers give of them; but there are several things contained in the latter, which seem to refer to a much later date. These three, with the two *Chaldee Paraphrases* of *Onkelos* and *Jonathan*, are the ancientest books which the Jews have, next the bible. For how much noise soever may be made about their *Rabbinical writings*, they are none of them above 700 years old. There are some of them indeed lay claim to a much antienter date, but without any reason for it.—Account of authors at the end of *Dean Prideaux's* life of *Mahomet*.

lofs what to think of them; we not only know them to be enemies, but what fort of enemies, and with what weapons they fight. For the *Mishnah* being once allowed by them, it cannot be denied †, but they must have these three manifest intentions, which the *Mishnah* has: First, to lessen the authority of any persons, or writings, which should be founded on *miracles*; secondly, to divert the intent of the original covenant and the law, and fix it upon the bare outward institutions; thirdly to insinuate, that the scriptures are not written as they are to be read, nor understood as they are written, but according to some secret instructions, first, given to *Moses*, and afterwards conveyed down by *oral tradition*.

ADD to this, that they have ever professed a belief of one supreme Being, in opposition to the Trinity, and expected a temporal Messiah; from all which it is very easy to conclude, what their designs must be. And indeed Christ himself gave us warning to beware of them, at a time, when

† See this fully proved by Mr. *Hutchinson* in his book intitled *Hebrew Writings perfect*, &c. p. 61. & seq.

when they were much less corrupted than they have been since, and had fewer traditions.—*Wo unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land, to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him two-fold more the child of hell than yourselves.* Matt. xxiii. 15, and verse 16. *Wo unto you blind guides; and verse 19. Wo unto you fools and blind! Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees.* Luke xii. 1. of those which, in another place he says, *love to be called Rabbi, Rabbi,* Matt. xxiii. 7. And that they made the word of God of none effect through their traditions. And the Apostle St. Paul continues the same cautions; *who both killed the Lord Jesus, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway, for the wrath of God is come upon them to the uttermost.* 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. and again Titus i. 14. Phil. iii. 2. And that these warnings extend to after-times, appears from the reason of the thing.—“*Si tempore Christi (says Voisin in his preface to Pugio Fidei) tanta erat invecata corruptio in traditiones legitimas, ut ejus* D 2 *ar-*

“ argui a Christo oportuerit ; et si sequen-
 “ tibus post Christum temporibus, eò cre-
 “ vit, ut suas hac de re querelas continere
 “ non potuerint Judæi sapientiores (ut jam
 “ retulimus) quantam fuisse existimare de-
 “ bemus, quando editum est *Talmud*, tanto
 “ post tempore, crescente indies Judæorum
 “ odio in religionem nostram ? ” Yet so
 infatuated have we been, as to learn He-
 brew from these men ; which tho’ some
 deny, by saying they rest chiefly on the *Sep-
 tuagint*, yet so long as they retain *pointing*
 and *Arabic*, they will never acquit them-
 selves of the charge.

But it may be argued, that although
 they had ever so great a mind to mislead
 us, they were restrained from so doing
 by the *Septuagint* translation ; and so in-
 deed they were in some measure, else we
 might have had another * scene of affairs.

But

* “ Quos (Judæos) ob sacrum codicem, postulante
 “ Ptolemæo Philadelpho, græcæ linguæ donatum,
 “ tantâ indigatione atque dolore incensos *Cuneus* re-
 “ fert (de *Republ. Hebr.* Lib. 3. Cap. 4.) ut micro-
 “ rem suum anniversario statoque ad diem octavam
 “ mensis *Theuth* jejunio publicè professi sunt. Ex quo
 “ solo facilis conjectura est, quæ hominibus, tanto ad-
 “ versus quoscunque alios odio laborantibus, in ethnicis
 “ ad meliora restituendis cura aut promptitudo fuerit,
 “ qui-

But because they could not do so much mischief as they would, are we to conclude they could do none? Because a man of bad character is restrained by the law from robbing me on the high-way, am I therefore to trust him with my estate?

I WOULD not have you understand me, as if I thought the Rabbinical *Grammars* and *Lexicons* were altogether of no use. *Fas est et ab hoste doceri*; but I believe they were never intended by providence to teach us the true meaning of the scriptures; but rather to upbraid the Christian church with their most notorious neglect of the Hebrew, and provoke them, if possible, to the study of it. The Jewish Rabbies had no other helps than are common to all; and shall we, who are equally qualified with them for the task, nay better (because we believe in the Christian covenant, the subject matter of the Hebrew scriptures and the key to them) shall we, I say, sit still, and see our title deeds to eternal salvation made void and null

“ quibus non alia magis sollicitudo, quam ne ad istos
 “ puri aliquid rectique emanaret.” *Tab. Pfanner Syst.*
Theol. Gentil. purior. p. 499.

null by their constructions? *Restore, O Lord, unto us, the ears that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmer-worm — that we may eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord our God, who hath dealt wondrously with us. See Joel ii. 25, 26.*



LET-



LETTER III.

DEAR SIR,

I SHALL now endeavour to lay before you, what is to be expected from the *oriental languages*; and as you inform me that the knowledge of the *Arabic* is generally at *Oxford* thought absolutely necessary towards the explication of the Hebrew scriptures, this point shall be particularly considered.

I BELIEVE it will be easily granted me, that the *Hebrew* is the original language, the *first*, from whence all others sprang. This is what is almost universally acknowledged by all writers, even by those, who have attempted to derive Hebrew words from other languages; tho' if all other languages are subsequent to the Hebrew,

I think it undeniably follows, that no Hebrew word can be *etymologically* derived from any of them ; much less can we believe, that the words *Aleim*, *Aratz*, *Shemim*, which are of God's own dictating *, can borrow their original signification from the words of men, not in being, till long after he imposed them.

BUT though we may not seek for the *etymology* of any Hebrew word in any other tongue, may not the words of other subsequent languages, more immediately derived from the Hebrew, and corresponding with it, serve greatly to explain the true usage and sense of divers words in the original, from whence they are derived ; especially if these languages continue in use, and are more copious and comprehensive than the original Hebrew is ?

BUT
* That אֱלֹהִים and אֶרֶץ are names of God's own imposing, appears from *Gen. i. 8, 10*. That שָׁמַיִם is so, may be concluded from the 3d chapter of *Genesis*; where Satan makes use of this word as a name well known, and familiar to *Eve*. And yet Dr. Pocock, in compliance with the Rabbies, in *Not. Miscell. p. 34*. derives *Aleim* from the Arabic *Alaba* coluit, *Shemim* from *Sama*, to be above, and *Aratz* from *Arada* to be beneath.

BUT it is to be observed, that the Hebrew scriptures are a record of great importance and concern, and such as do not admit of this kind of *guess-work*; for so I call this method of interpretation for the following reasons.

FOR first, before any word in any other language can be admitted as explicative of its correspondent Hebrew word, we must be sure that the said word was derived from such Hebrew word; else it may serve to mislead, instead of directing us. We may know so far of a language in general, that it is derived from the Hebrew, and yet be very much at a loss, when we come to particulars, which words answer which.

SECONDLY, we must be sure this word has not been misapplied; for if men will take God's words, and apply them to other purposes and things, than what God has applied them to, they will be so far from explaining the original, that they will rather obscure and perplex it; and this will unavoidably happen, either if the speakers

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of

of this language were Heathens, and so strangers to the ideas conveyed by the Hebrew scriptures, and the principal things there spoken of; or if the language continues long in use, because of the daily alterations living languages undergo; or lastly, if improvements are made in it, and it becomes more copious and comprehensive; because of the many additions made, and new senses imposed: so that the reasons, which have been given for admitting these languages, prove rather against them, than for them.

THIRDLY, supposing this word is actually derived from the Hebrew word in question, and has not been misapplied, by what rules are we to know this? Is there any certainty either of the one, or of the other? And if not, what are we doing more than explaining an *ignotum per ignotius*?

BUT this method of interpreting Hebrew, by the help of the oriental languages, is not only very uncertain, but also needless; for a language built upon roots, as the Hebrew is, stands in need
of

of such helps; and although, under proper restrictions, they may be of some use, where we can get no better help, as in the *απαξ λεγόμενα*, yet, God be thanked, all words of importance occur too often to need any other help, than comparing the several places together, to fix their sense and meaning. And thus I think, that whatever the Rabbies have told us concerning the great use of the oriental languages (for this information comes originally from them) ought to be looked upon as unproved, and of no authority.

BUT as great promises have been made us from the *Arabic*, and there is a public professor of this language in both our universities (an honour not paid to any other of the oriental languages, except the Hebrew itself) it deserves a more particular consideration. The many excellencies and beauties, attributed to this language, are not a subject for me to enlarge upon by letter; let it suffice, that I enquire into that which more immediately respects the present question, *viz.* its great antiquity, and its much boasted agreement with the Hebrew.

CONCERNING the antiquity of the Arabic language, there are several different opinions. Your present professor, who in his late oration on the Arabic tongue undertakes to give us * “ certissimas omnium
 “ quotquot extitere linguarum stirpes,” tells you, that it took its rise from the confusion of languages at *Babel*, and that it is †
 “ ipsa confusione, non multis fortasse annis, minor. Nam si Arabas doctiores de
 “ suâ linguâ loquentes consulamus, videbimus eos prima illius incunabula ad quendam *Yarabum*, *Kabtâni* filium referre.—
 “ Qui si idem sit, ut ipsi volunt, cum *Yare-*
 “ *ahbo* (for so he pronounces ירה) *Yoktani*
 “ filio, *Gen. x. 26.* memorato, erit a *Shemo*
 “ ipso quintus, et ex eorum numero, quibus, post linguarum divisionem, habitationes in Mosaicâ historiâ assignatas legimus.”

BUT if there be no better evidence than this, it will be taking up your time to very little purpose to disprove it, especially as it is incumbent upon those, who maintain the antiquity of this language, to produce
 some

* Orat. de Ling. Arabicæ Antiquitate, Elegantiâ, Utilitate, p. 3. † Eadem Orat. p. 4.

some authentic writings, whereby we may know, what it was in former times, and whether it agrees with the present Arabic; for if it cannot be proved to be the same now, that it was then, what signifies its antiquity? And that this cannot be proved, is granted both by * Dr. Pocock and † Mr. Profeflor himself.

No writings have ever been pretended to be produced in this language so ancient as our Saviour; and as to what has been wrote since, supposing them authentic, and before the time of *Mahomet*, it comes too late, and only proves that the Arabic has the least pretension of any of the oriental languages to the encomiums bestowed upon it: And as these writings are said to be only a few scraps of poetry, preserved by memory only for 3000 years, and now put to writing, they are not only of no authority, but if they were, could never be sufficient to settle the language,

and

* “ Quod verò de linguæ Arabicæ antiquitate dixi, nolo de earum *litteris* et *scripturâ* intelligi, quas multo recentiores fuisse ostendit *Pocockius*, in notis ad Specim. Arab. p. 154.

† “ Verum non eadem est *scripturæ* quæ sermonis antiquitas, nec calamus linguæ coævus.” Orat. de Ling. Arab. Antiq. Eleg. Util. p. 11.

and determine the nature of it. And I will beg leave to ask the advocates for Arabic themselves, whether they so much as pretend to make these detached pieces the standard of it? No, when they recommend Arabic, as explicative of the Hebrew scriptures, they must mean the modern Arabic, or they can mean nothing; and if so, * the *Alkoran* is the standard of it, and accordingly Mr. Professor himself refers you to this, “ ut doctorem, ita et custodem hujus linguæ.” So then, this † book is to be received as the grand *preservative* of the true meaning of the Hebrew scriptures in all cases, in which any one shall please to apply it; ‡ how many this may be, it is impossible to determine.

BUT the greatest argument for the antiquity of this language is drawn from its agree-

* *Al.* is a particle which signifies in Arabic the same as the English *the* or the Greek *ὁ, ἡ, τὸ*. *Al koran*, the *Koran*, the book to be read, but we commonly in English call it the *Alkoran*.

† *Orat. de Ling. Arab.* &c. p. 10.

‡ What we are to expect, appears from *Hottinger*, who maintains—“ Vix intricatiorem occurrere voculam in sacra scriptura, cui *Arabia* non aliquid afferat lucis.” *Smegm. Orientale* cap. 7. p. 107.

* agreement with the Hebrew, and this is what has deceived many; but surely this is no proof of its antiquity, because if it is a new-formed language, we can easily account for the resemblance there is between them; what are we to think of it, if it is found to be a hodge-podge of corrupted *Chaldee* and *Hebrew* mixed together, framed by our enemies, and first applied by them to the explication of the Hebrew scriptures? We read in history, that they were many years in perfecting the *Alkoran*, and that they forced all under their power to make it the standard of the Arabic language; whereas if its conformity was owing to its antiquity, the ancient Arabic should have been the standard of the language, and even then, we must believe with † *Erpenius*, that this language continued 3000 years in use, as a living language, and that it was all this while—

“ Sermo purus ab omni barbarie, in primitivo

* The Arabic, says *Erpenius*, “ Usque adeo communi matri (viz. the *Hebrew*) est *similis*, ut cum de plerisque aliis, an immediatè ex eà prognatæ sint, dubitari possit, de hâc tamen prorsus nullus extat dubitandi locus; quippe in eâ matris *imago* tam est manifesta, ut eam qui intuetur matrem se intueri dicat.” Orat. prima de Ling. Arab. p. 7.

Simia quam *similis*, turpissima bestia, nobis!

† *Erpenius* Orat. prima de Lingua Arabica.

“mitivo suo nitore conservatus.” So that those who understand these matters are pretty well agreed, that the *Alkoran* for language, as well as matter, is the united contrivance of Jews, Heathens, and apostate Christians.

AND farther, it will be found upon examination, that the agreement of this language with the Hebrew is not so great as has been imagined; for the * letters in Arabic not being of the same name, figure, order, or power with the Hebrew alphabet, those that mean us well cannot exactly tell, which letters in the Arabic answer to their respective letters in the Hebrew; and as the Hebrew roots consist but of three letters, a mistake in any one of them quite alters the sense; and this is still more precarious, if you go by pronunciation, and change one guttural, labial, or lingual letter for another, as our enemies

* The number of the letters in the Arabic alphabet is 28, in the Hebrew 22. Some have endeavoured to reconcile them by saying the six supernumerary letters are no more than Hebrew letters pointed, and so do not increase the alphabet; but this will not answer the difficulty, because Arabic has points, as well as the Hebrew, and, if we believe the author of *Racines Hebraiques*, was pointed *before* the Hebrew.

mies have done *, nay sometimes have taken the liberty of adding or expunging a letter.

AGAIN, the Arabic language, as Bishop † *Walton* informs us, “ tantâ copiâ alias
“ linguas superat, ut unius rei appellatio-
“ nes, earumque explicationes, voluminis
“ integri materiam præbeant ; *leonis* no-
“ mina habet 500, *serpentis* 200, *mellis*
“ 80, de quibus integrum libellum scrip-
“ sit *Firazzibadius* ; *ensis* vero appella-
“ tiones idem testatur esse 10,000.” In
this it by no means agrees with the He-
brew, nor with any other ancient lan-
guage, and so betrays itself.

THAT the Arabic is a language aptly
suited to the use that has been made of it,
will appear from the following considera-
tions.

FIRST,

* The Rabbies have a rule for this—“ *Literæ ejus-
dem instrumenti sæpè inter se commutantur.*”—A
specimen of the liberties they take may be seen in
Mr. *Holloway*'s late printed tract on the *Primævity*
and *Pre-eminence* of the *Hebrew*. p. 90. & alibi.

† *Walton*, Proleg.

FIRST, as the words of this language are most vague and indeterminate in their meaning, it gives the greatest room for quibblings, and perversion of the Hebrew text.

SECONDLY, from the boundless multiplicity of its words, it must be a language very difficult to understand, and this is what the most learned among the Arabians confess; by which means *two ends* are obtained, the *one*, to deter us from the study of the Hebrew scriptures, because of the difficulties attending it; the *other*, to give authority to the explanations of those who understand the Arabic best. Now who these are, we very well know; and as we must give an enemy the same liberties which we take ourselves, this language, being once acknowledged as explicative of the Hebrew scriptures, the *Mahometans* may put their own constructions upon them, and we have no way left of defending ourselves. The original scriptures are our title-deeds to our inheritance, they are the birthright of a Christian, and be it at his peril,

peril, if he suffers them to be wrested out of his hands: They are the evidence of what you believe as a Christian, and they only can give authority to what you preach as a clergyman.

Τιτῦρ, εἰμιν το καλον, πεφιλαμενε, βοσχε τας
αιγας,

Και ποτι ταν κραναν αγε Τιτῦρε, και τον
ενορχαν,

Τον Λιβυκον κνακωνα φυλασσεο, μη τυ κο-
ρυψη.

Theocrit. Idyll. 3. 3.



F E T

TART



LETTER IV.

DEAR SIR,

I THINK I have already said enough to convince you, that the several fore-mentioned methods of interpretation are not so satisfactory as has been generally imagined; nay that taking all these helps together, the Old Testament can never be well understood by their means. If then some farther assistance is necessary, you will give me leave to propose that, which I think will not fail to be effectual, viz. a more diligent study of the *original Hebrew*, with a more careful observation of the connection between the *Roots* and their *derivatives*; without which, I conceive, you must of necessity be misled, whether you trust to the *LXX*, or to any other interpretation whatsoever.

THAT this language is built upon roots, in a manner different from all other languages, is what has been universally acknowledged; and the lexicons, which are all formed upon this principle, shew it: but the great authority given either to the *Septuagint translation*, or to *Rabbinical interpretations*, and the *Oriental languages*, have so confounded us in the use, that might otherwise have been made of this peculiar structure of it, that although the method of explaining words by their roots has been constantly retained, yet has it not been extended so far as it ought, much less been looked upon as the most authentic method of interpretation.

THIS then being manifestly the structure of the language, we say, that roots, with their derivatives, may be considered, either as they have a *literal*, or an *ideal* affinity with each other: by the *literal agreement*, we understand only the literal connection between the root and all words derived from it; by the *ideal*, a sameness of sense and meaning, communicated

nicated from the one to the other, and of which both partake. The *literal* agreement is that which constitutes the relation; the *ideal* is a claim consequent upon it, whereby we conceive the sense to be as connected as the letter; and that as every root, literally considered, is branched out into its several derivatives, so the idea, conveyed by this root, divides itself in the same manner; the original idea is in the root, and the several derivatives are only so many applications of it to different subjects. The literal relation between the roots and their derivatives has indeed been * always attended to, but the ideal connection, which is the most instructive of the two, has for the most part been overlooked, and if acknowledged-

* The Rabbies, who were the first compilers of the Hebrew Grammars and Lexicons, set out upon this division of words into *roots* and their *derivatives*, but did by no means class them as they ought to have done. Whether this was done by ignorance, or design, I leave others to judge; this is certain, there is much rubbish to be removed, before we can build the wall; and those that labour at this work, should take care, as on the one hand, not to multiply the number of original roots by making too many primitives; so on the other hand, not to lessen them, by making too many derivatives: Let every branch have its own root, and every root its own branches.

knowleged in some few cases, where it is plain and obvious, it has been wholly neglected in others, or if attempted, but very imperfectly explained; though there is no good reason to be given, why this method of interpretation should hold good in one case, and not in another. If this peculiar structure of the language is arbitrary, and for no end, there is indeed no regard to be paid to it; but if by design, (which, as God is the author of it, one cannot but believe) the end is as extensive as the means, and if we acknowlege this ideal relation in one case, we cannot reasonably deny it in another; especially as by this means the whole language is uniform, as built upon one and the same principle, and becomes hereby explicative of itself. If our notion of radical ideas is true, you will be pleased to observe, that the Hebrew language will be more easy to learn than any other, because there is less variety of words to remember; but if false, it will be found the most æquivocal of all languages, because the same word so often signifies several different things, and these, in some instances, directly opposite and contrary to each other.

And

And the advocates for the Septuagint version would do well to consider, that the authority of this translation is so far from being destroyed hereby, that it is really established upon a much better footing than it was before; for although it is declared to be utterly incapable of expressing the original sense of the Hebrew text, yet if it is found sufficient for the discovery of the radical ideas, the *necessity* of it is acknowledged, and its *value* ascertained; nay the manifest errors, with which it abounds, and with which it has been charged, from an insurmountable difficulty, becomes a very insignificant objection.

THAT this is no new opinion, appears from the works of some learned men of the last age, and in particular from *Gussetius* *, who, conceiving that the sense of the Hebrew scriptures must be left at great uncertainties, if there was no better criterion of the true meaning of them, than what was afforded by the received methods of interpretation, and thinking this highly derogatory to a book, which

* *Gussetius* Comment. Ling. Hebr.

which has God for its author, maintained, that each Hebrew root had but one *single idea*, and that this idea was communicated to all the *derivatives*, and endeavoured to form a lexicon upon this plan. It is true indeed he failed in his attempt, and did by no means give that satisfaction which he aimed at, so that it was looked upon as a wild and imaginary undertaking.

BUT Mr. *Hutchinson*, who saw the reason why this scheme did not succeed, and was persuaded, that true philosophy and true divinity must go hand in hand with each other, searched the *scriptures* for what others before him had sought from their own *Experiments*, and from their *their own brains*, and soon found that God has not been wanting in *natural*, any more than in *spiritual* truths; nay has made the knowlege of the one, a ground-work for instruction in the other: for as man is limited to sense, and can have no idea of *spiritual things* but by the intervention of *sensible objects*—as “*Nihil est in intellectu, quod non fuit prius in sensu,*”—God has suited his

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instructions to our capacities, and given us a language consisting of roots and their derivatives, to the end that every word may have a fixed and determinate meaning. The primary idea is in the root, which is always significant of something which our senses may comprehend; and this being understood, it is applied in the derivatives, either to other material things, which need explication, or to spirituals, whereby they are brought down to a level with our capacities; and the words made use of are not only more intelligible than those of other languages, but also more instructive, in that they give us sure and certain ideas (as far as our conceptions reach) of the spiritual world, and of all our concerns with it.

AND this method of instruction is the discovery, whereby Mr. *Hutchinson* has been enabled to excell all that went before him; and the light let in by it upon the Hebrew scriptures is a convincing proof of the sufficiency of it: and whoever will take the pains to search the Hebrew scriptures for himself (which he must do before he can be a competent

tent judge of this matter) will have evidence sufficient in every page to assure him, that God's language is different from all other languages, and that it teaches us not so much by word, as by *Picture*; he will find that God has not only declared his love towards man πολύμερος και πολύτροπος, but has made his language, as it were, a *pourtraiture* of himself.

BUT nevertheless I find great exceptions have been made to this method of interpretation; and first, it has been represented as an insult upon all *authority* and *antiquity*, which, in matters of religion, are of a very sacred nature. New discoveries may indeed take place in the *natural* world, but not so in the *spiritual*; there can be no concerning truth in christianity, which is not ancient; whatsoever is *truly new*, is certainly false; and if the holy scriptures, which are the foundation we stand upon, are to be interpreted in a different manner from what they have hitherto been, it may have bad consequences.

I WILL beg leave to answer this objection in the words of Bishop *Jewell*—
 “ Certè in religionem Dei nihil gravius
 “ dici potest, quàm si ea accusetur *novi-*
 “ *tatis* ; ut enim in Deo ipso, ita in ejus
 “ cultu, nihil oportet esse *novum*. Ve-
 “ rùm quid si ea, quæ isti *nova* videri
 “ volunt, inveniantur esse *antiquissima* ?
 “ Rursus, quid si ea ferè omnia, quæ ipsi
 “ *antiquitatis* nomine tantoperè prædi-
 “ cant, ubi ea probè et diligenter excussa
 “ fuerint, ad extremum inveniantur *recen-*
 “ *tia* et *nova* ? ” The Hebrew scriptures
 are much ancients than the primitive christians,
 or the Septuagint translation, but not ancients
 than the roots and their derivatives, which are
 essential to the language, and constitute the
 difference between it, and all other tongues of
 human invention, and therefore are the much
 ancients rule of interpretation ; and if the
 neglect of this is thought too great an omission
 for the primitive church to be guilty of, let it be
 considered, what the *Spirit saith unto the churches*,
 Rev. cap. ii. and iii. Far be it from me by
 any means to lessen the weight and authority

rity due to their writings and sanctity ; but they were not without their faults, and those very gross ones too, as appears by this account given of them by St. *John*.

ANOTHER objection to this method of interpretation are the great *difficulties* attending it ; for all words must be reduced to their proper roots, and when this is done, a fixed and determinate idea given to each, which is a work of great labour and pains. We readily acknowlege these difficulties, and that they are very great ones ; but the question will be, whether these difficulties are to be overcome, or not ? If they are so, even but in part, it is our duty to attempt it ; and we have seen so many of them surmounted already, as gives us great reason to hope others may be so too : but if all this is lost labour, and the recovery of the radical ideas is nothing more than an imaginary scheme, as some think, I fear the Hebrew must remain (as it has been by some represented) an equivocal, uselefs, and lost language, we having nothing to trust to but translations, whose word is to be taken on all occasions, for want of better information.

tion. If by this method the difficulties were increased, there might be some cause of complaint; but as it manifestly tends to lessen them, the *slugard* indeed may compose himself to sleep, and say, there is *a lion in the way*, but who, that is not so, will believe him?

A THIRD objection to this method is the *uncertainty* of it; we may mistake the true root, and if this is certainly known, we may misapprehend the true idea, and by what criterion are we to know, whether we are right or wrong? It is a pleasing scheme, in which there is great room for imagination, but little shew of certainty, at least, such as is requisite in so important a point; that we have already disagreed in our constructions, and must continue so to do—"Verum isti *id* vituperant factum, atque in *eo* disputant?" Can our adversaries shew us any other method of construction, that does not labour under greater uncertainties, and in which there is not more notorious disagreement? Our scheme is as yet in its infancy, and not perfected, and therefore may deserve some allowances; but they,
who

who urge authority and antiquity, have not this to say in excuse. As we rest upon the Septuagint, we have the same criterion of right or wrong constructions, as others have; and if we improve upon it, by considering the connection between the roots and their derivatives, we do not rely upon this method *solely*, if not supported by scripture reasonings, and scripture texts. We have a rule to go by in every idea we fix, which is first its agreement with the *natural* world, and if applied to *spirituals*, with the *analogy of faith*; which circumstances being duly observed, there is no great fear of any very material error.

We have construed enough already, to shew that the *Shemim* (the *Heavens*) are the great agents in nature; that they are the material representatives of the *spiritual Trinity* in *Unity*. We have explained some of the principal doctrines of christianity, in the words *Rubbin*, *Cherubim*, *Elohim*, *Berith*; we have shewn in what consisted all the idolatrous worship of the ancient heathens, and by so doing, the design of many parts of scripture,

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before

before not so well understood; and these are leading truths, and such as will serve to direct us in our farther searches.

If there are any farther objections to be made, I shall be obliged to you if you will acquaint me with them. To convince me of an error, is the greatest kindness you can do me; I would escape from it with joy, *as a bird from the hand of the fowler*; but to disprove, is one thing, and to dislike, is another; and this I the rather mention, because you tell me that most of your acquaintance represent Mr. Hutchinson, as "*hominem sine arte, sine literis, insultantem in omnes, sine acumine ullo, sine auctoritate, sine lepore*;" nay that his followers are branded with the opprobrious names of *cabbalists, mysticks, typists, enthusiasts*, and what not? so that I could not so much as attempt an answer, did not you happily by your quotation from * Cicero supply me with one, which is to be found in the same author, and in the very same page. "*Salem istum (quo carere debet vestra academia) in irridendis nobis nolitote consumere; atque si me*" au-

* Cicero de Naturâ Deor. p. 166. §. 29. Edit. Davis.

“ audiatis, ne experiamini quidem—non
 “ *deceat* ; non *datum est* ; non *potestis* .”

YOU will now give me leave to lay before you a few considerations, which seem to speak very much in our favour.

AND first, if what Mr. *Hutchinson* advances be true, it shews the fitness of this language for the use it is put to ; for if the Hebrew is so contrived, as to consist wholly of roots and their derivatives, which derivatives retain the idea of the root, it is of all other languages the most fit and proper to record matters of great moment and concern, because the true sense of a word is better secured than is possible to be in any other language. Derivatives may indeed have several secondary meanings ; but as they all partake of the primary idea, they cannot be wrested, as the words of other languages may, nor are they so subject to sophistry and cavil—*The words of the LORD are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.* Psal. xii. 6.

SECONDLY, the structure of the Hebrew language, in the light Mr. *Hutchinson* puts it, is an internal evidence, that the Hebrew scriptures are of God's own inditing, who only knows the resemblance between the *natural* world and the *spiritual*, and who only is able to give the information this language affords.

THIRDLY, this method of construction explains to us, how the Hebrew scriptures are preserved intelligible to us by the Septuagint translation; which, though seemingly insufficient, yet fully answers the end. If the Hebrew was like other languages, it must have been preserved intelligible as they are, by some co-temporary writings, or authorized translations; but as it is explicative of itself, it needs only such a translation, as is sufficient to recover the radical ideas, which the Septuagint effectually does.

LASTLY, to use the words of Mr. *Hutchinson* himself, "It is vastly for the authority and certainty of the Hebrew scriptures, that they are to be construed

" strued by themselves, and that there
 " were no human writings in that tongue
 " preserved, nor writings in any other
 " language of that antiquity : for if there
 " had been such, as there must have been
 " errors in them, especially about mens
 " notions in philosophy, divinity, &c. ei-
 " ther they would have wrote relations of
 " some facts which were not true, or they
 " would have used some letters in words,
 " or some words or names, improperly ;
 " any of which would have given an occa-
 " sion to the adversary to have disputed
 " the facts, or significations of the words
 " or facts, writ by the inspired authors,
 " which by special providence is pre-
 " vented. If there had been any writ-
 " ings which had the least appearance of
 " being of that language or age, those who
 " know not a diamond from a pebble,
 " much less the difference of their value,
 " would have been continually setting up
 " their authority against that of the *Hebrew*
 " scriptures. This admits of no dispute ;
 " because, when it is certain there are
 " none such, they are continually striving
 " to make a parcel of scraps, of vastly later
 " date (by their own confession, translated

“ out of the languages they were writ in,
 “ and, as is evident, about things they
 “ know nothing of) histories of men and
 “ times, and labour night and day with
 “ them to invalidate the authority of the
 “ *Hebrew.*” *New Account of the confusion*
of Tongues pag. 39, 40.

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